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Lights, camera and creativity

Life-changing studios coming to Kauai



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Posted: Saturday, July 19, 2014 12:30 am

Lisa Ann Capozzi - The Garden Island | 0 comments

Video conference learning has linked up studios worldwide from New Zealand to Fiji to Hilo using the technology and expertise of High Tech Youth Studio.

Kauai will be next.

With a mission to empower young people in underserved communities to become more capable, creative, and confident, High Tech Youth Studios intends to open on Kauai in January 2015. The studios will be free outlets for students 8 to 25 years of age.

"In terms of locations of studios on Kauai — early scoping and consultation has been occurring with schools and community over the last 12 months," said Mike Usmar, CEO of High Tech Youth Studio. "This week, local and High Tech staff are on Kauai meeting to finalize where the first two studios will be."

The studios will be funded initially by \$360,000 from the Office of Hawaii Affairs and \$180,000 raised through corporate donors and grants.

Kane Milne, director of learning for High Tech Youth, and Kris Kua, the creative director at the Hilo studio location called Studio Shaka, said they are fairly confident the sites for the studios will be in Waimea, Kawaikini: a New Century Public Charter School and possibly the Anahola area as well.

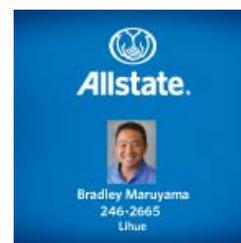
Shanoa Vidinha, 14, has seen what a difference Studio Shaka has made in her peers' lives.

"There are a handful I know that if we didn't have the studio would be doing drugs and things they're not supposed to be doing," Vidinha said.

Designed to be a safe place for youth to expand their horizons, the range of creative expression will be nearly infinite. The after-school facilities will offer state-of-the-art learning where youth can experiment with animation, robotics, engineering, website design, video game development, software coding and music and video production.

"These kids are writing code and creating apps for their phones," Kua said. "These guys are so creative. They make ornaments and keychains with 3D laser cutters. They really learn from each other in this type of setting."

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The original High Tech Youth Studio was in Otara, New Zealand. When it opened 10 years ago, it welcomed only six students the first day. Enrollment grew to 30 on day two and currently has more than 600 eager learners.

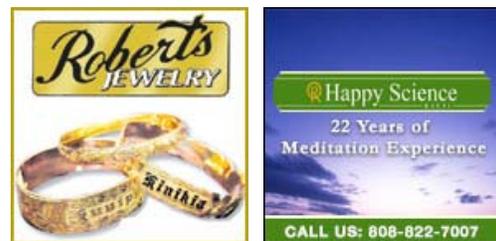
"It's student driven," Milne said. "They can be in control of their learning. Their teacher is the person next to them. One person creates something and they say, 'How did you do that?'"

Milne and Kua have seen confidence building in students.

"High Tech Youth operate under a protocol where we deploy when communities invite us in — and we are privileged to have worked with local community champions to get us to this point, and look forward to taking the next step," Usmar said.

Info: www.hightechyouth.org

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